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SUBJECT: KIRILL CRONIES BENEFIT FROM RUSSIAN ORTHODOX
RESTRUCTURING

REF: A. MOSCOW 106
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 546

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. On March 31, Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) Patriarch Kirill presided over the first meeting of Church leaders since his enthronement, introducing significant personnel and structural changes to the ROC. Kirill appointed faithful supporter Bishop Ilarion as the new Chairman of the Department of External Affairs, promoted his former deputy Vsevolod Chaplin to lead ROC relations with societal groups, and demoted his former rival Metropolitan Kliment. Recognizing the importance of public relations in his drive to grow the Church, Kirill appointed a layperson to head the ROC's Department of Information while lambasting the harmful influence of the Russian media on youth. The Ministry of Justice placed Aleksandr Dvorkin, an Orthodox priest and self-appointed expert on sects, to head its commission on religious expertise, eliciting an outcry from minority religious organizations. The presidential administration and Moscow mayor's office also appointed new leaders of respective departments that deal with religious organizations, suggesting Kirill's deep political influence. End Summary.

Friends of a Feather...

[1](#)2. (SBU) Kirill successfully promoted several close confidantes in his "personnel revolution" by making significant structural changes to the Church hierarchy, ultimately creating several new positions and new departments. Kirill presided over the first meeting of the ROC's highest decision-making body, the Holy Synod, on March 31, during which the nine leaders unanimously approved Kirill's appointment of his former deputy Bishop Ilarion (Hilarion) of Vienna and Austria as the Chairman of the Department for External Church Affairs (DECA). A fixture in the department since 1995, Ilarion's functions will include relations with Orthodox and non-Orthodox churches, state institutions, and civil society institutions outside the former Soviet Union. In an Interfax press conference on April 10, his comments on the ROC's outreach efforts to Russian youth resonated with his predecessor's, Patriarch Kirill, recent statements. Ilarion said that "since Orthodox believers go to discotheques and rock concerts, if the Church could attach some kind of Orthodox significance to these gatherings, then why couldn't our priests go out and say a few words to the youth as well?" He also repeated the precondition for a meeting between Kirill and Pope Benedict XVI: renunciation of Roman Catholic Church missionary activity in Russia.

[1](#)3. (SBU) After Ilarion's appointment, the ROC sent Acting Chairman of External Affairs, Bishop Mark of Yegoryevsk, to serve as Moscow Patriarchate Secretariat for Institutions Abroad. Bishop Mark will be directly accountable to Patriarch Kirill in this role. The decision to send Bishop Mark overseas did not constitute a lack of Kirill's

confidence or a demotion; rather, it demonstrated appreciation for Mark's support during Kirill's rise to power and excellent service to the ROC immediately after Kirill's enthronement, according to Kirill supporter and religious analyst Archdeacon Andrey Kurayev (Note: Kurayev also received a small promotion for his support of Kirill). The patriarch rounded out his DECA staff by naming Priest Georgiy Ryabykh (Acting Secretary for Liaison Between the Church and Public) and Archpriest Nikolay Balashov (Patriarchate Secretary for Relations with other Orthodox Churches) as deputy chairmen of the DECA.

14. (SBU) The patriarch named his former deputy in the DECA, Vsevolod Chaplin, as the Chairman of the newly created Department for Cooperation between Church and Society, responsible for associations with political parties, unions, legislative bodies, and civil society institutions in the former Soviet Union. While Chaplin primarily will deal with the same set of issues that he handled before, his new position commands greater authority. Experts have long considered Chaplin to be an influential protectionist who has spoken out against the negative influence of non-Orthodox groups. Chaplin, known in the highest Church circles as a "walking encyclopedia" and for his language proficiency (high fluency in English and German), will also coordinate with party officials on proposed legislation. Even though the ROC does not have any power to introduce legislation, Chaplin noted at an April 10 press conference that "the Church's voice should be heard." In discussions on the separation of secular and religious spheres, he commented in September 2008 that "if we consider the church as an institution, then yes, it is different from the state... but if we consider the

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church as a community of believers, then it's simply impossible to separate these concepts. A social partnership is a natural development."

Ousted Rival

15. (SBU) Kirill's heated electoral campaign against Metropolitan Kliment for the throne produced the expected fallout on March 31, when Kirill announced that he would remove Kliment from his position as Administrator of the Moscow Patriarchate and appoint him as the Chairman of the ROC's Publishing Department. Not only did this decision deprive Kliment of his permanent seat in the Holy Synod (the Metropolitans of Kyiv, Minsk, Chisinau, St. Petersburg, and Krutitsk, plus the Chairman of DECA also have Synod seats ex-officio), it also essentially sidelined him since the ROC's publishing department no longer performs as vital a role as it did in the propaganda days in the Soviet Union. First Vice President of the Center for Political Technologies Aleksey Makarkin commented in Russian daily Yezhednevniy Zhurnal on April 3 that Kirill's decision to remove Metropolitan Kliment from his post signified that Kirill would not rule the ROC with a deputy, a first in the post-WWII era. In fact, he noted that the Synod selected little-known Archbishop Varsonofiy of Saransk and Mordovia as the temporary administrator for the Moscow Patriarchate.

Kirill Forcing Government's Hand?

16. (SBU) While media outlets refrained from connecting the dots, three more government officials notably shifted seats in the wake of Kirill's enthronement. On April 3, the Ministry of Justice assembled its newly-minted Commission for the Implementation of State Expertise on Religious Science, formed by Ministry decree on March 3, 2009. At the meeting, Commission members unanimously elected the controversial Russian Orthodox priest and AmCit Aleksandr Dvorkin as Chairman of the Ministry's Commission, which was mandated by federal law in July 2008. Dvorkin, a self-avowed specialist on cults with close ties to Justice Minister Alexander

Konovalov, founded and has headed the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religion and Sects since 2006, and also serves as the "sect studies" Chairman of the Orthodox Humanitarian St. Tikhon University. The Commission replaced an earlier collection of academic experts created in 1998 to advise the Ministry of Justice on religious questions, and will hold extensive power to introduce and enforce legislation on religious organizations, according to an article written by Eurasian religious expert Paul Goble on April 4. The Commission's ranks also included Roman Silyantev, a bureaucrat who lost his position on the Russian Inter-Religious Council for his attacks on Islam in 2008.

17. (SBU) The election of Dvorkin elicited an outcry from religious experts and minority religious groups in Russia. Religion analyst Mikhail Stinikov compared the decision to "authorizing the donkey to guard the vegetable patch," and Russian Academy of sciences researcher Roman Lunkin labeled the Ministry as "on the warpath." Chief Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin stated that the new commission would be of "no value to Muslims," since no academic experts on Islam had been included. President of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (RUECB) Yuriy Sipko decried the development, as did Public Chamber member and Pentecostal bishop Sergey Ryakhovskiy, who characterized Dvorkin as an "importer of instability" in reference to his 20 years in the US prior to 1990. (Note: Dvorkin has accused Ryakhovskiy of being an "American" in the past as well). Goble noted Dvorkin's history of criticism of Mormons, Evangelicals, and Catholics in Russia, as well as his past exclusive promotion of the four traditional religions (Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism) in Russia, a point Kirill advocated himself in the late 1990s.

18. (SBU) On April 1, the Kremlin appointed former Molodaya Gvardiya head Ivan Demidov as the new Chairman of the Public Relations and Humanitarian Policy Department, a division of the Presidential Administration's Internal Politics Directorate. In this role, Demidov will supervise relations with religious organizations, a theme he may have touched on in his previous position as head of United Russia's Ideological Directorate. Demidov also received an appointment to serve on Dvorkin's commission in the Ministry of Justice. On April 2, Russian newswire www.newsru.com reported that Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov had fired Nikolay Merkulov, the Chairman of the Moscow Committee on Relations with Religious Organizations. Merkulov had served in the position since 1992.

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Layperson Takes Media Helm

19. (SBU) Kirill appointed layman Vladimir Legoyda, editor of the Orthodox magazine Foma, as the new head for the ROC's newly created Department of Information, demonstrating his intent to utilize public relations specialists and media outlets to grow the size and power of the ROC. The move marked the first time in the Church's history that a layperson would head a branch of the Church administration. Legoyda noted at an April 10 press conference that he hoped to help the Church "find its proper place in the mass media" by ensuring that all media outlets produced reports about the ROC which were "true to fact." Kirill also held his first internet question and answer chat session with Russians in March 2009, a sign that he would utilize technology to enhance the ROC's outreach efforts. Not only has the ROC transitioned into a new sphere of media culture, it has also noted its disapproval of immoral television programming, calling on the Russian government to end transmission of the popular reality television show "Dom-2" because "people's personal lives should not be on public display." Kirill criticized the negative influence of the mass media on Russian youth in a speech to the St. Petersburg Religious Academy on April 7, saying that current programming appealed

to the youth's "animal instincts."

Comment

¶10. (SBU) All signs point to Kirill's growth as a political heavyweight in Russia. Makarkin pointed to a new power center in the Church, led by Metropolitans Yuvenaliy, Vladimir, and Filaret, who all studied under Metropolitan Nikodim and would help secure the Church's political ascent (ref A). He also suggested that the current personnel shuffle proves Kirill is 100% in control of the Church, especially in comparison to late Patriarch Aleksey II, who only managed to oust a few of Patriarch Pimen's cadre in 1990 after his enthronement. Concerning the Church's relationship to other domestic organizations, the appointments of Dvorkin and Chaplin to more influential roles bodes poorly for Russian religious minorities, especially those deemed to be "sects" (ref B). Considering the Ministry of Justice Commission's new power to judge the activities of and dissolve religious organizations, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) will probably see an uptick in cases from Russia.

RUBIN